



THE FIXER



Biden has long-term inflation plan, but voter patience short

President Joe Biden speaks at the Daniel Technology Center of Germanna Community College – Culpeper Campus, Feb. 10, 2022, in Culpeper, Va.

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Biden has long-term inflation plan, but voter patience short

From Front

By **JOSH BOAK**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden came into office with a plan to fix inflation — just not the particular inflationary problem that the country now faces. His belief is that a cluster of companies control too many industries, which reduces competition for both customers and workers. That leads to higher prices and lower wages in what the White House says is an average cost of \$5,000 annually for U.S. families. Biden is now trying to remedy the situation with 72 distinct initiatives — everything from new rules for cell phone repairs to regulations on meatpacking to more merger reviews.

"The dynamics of the modern American economy — the increased consolidation and lack of competition — has distorted market incentives in important ways," said Brian Deese, director of the White House National Economic Council. "The president gave us the direction that he wanted us to come back and say what could we do to address this issue of consolidation across industries in a way that would be durable." But even administration officials acknowledge that the initiatives outlined by the president's seven-month-old competition council aren't designed to quickly stop the 7.5% inflation that's frustrating Americans and damaging Biden's popularity. Furthermore, business groups dispute the fundamental premise that competition has faded within the U.S. economy and they are prepared to challenge the administration's new initiatives in court.

"It will strangle economic growth," said Neil Bradley, executive vice president and chief policy officer of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. "Ironically, what this will do is actually lead to more inflation."

Part of Biden's dilemma is that reorienting a bureaucracy to promote competi-

tion takes time, and voters want to see inflation — running at a 40-year peak — start dropping now. Voters feel the bite of inflation with every trip they make to the grocery store or the gas station, yet the president is traveling the country to discuss solutions such as competition and new infrastructure that predate the current predicament and would have a much more gradual impact.

America's current inflation woes stem from the pandemic. Supply chains for computer chips, clothes, furniture and other goods are under stress. At the same time, consumer demand has surged after a historical amount of government aid flowed into the economy. Despite efforts to get the kinks out of the supply chain, price increases have stayed high in recent months instead of fading as many initial forecasts suggested. That has the Federal Reserve ready to increase interest rates to lower inflation.

In a January survey by the University of Chicago, two-thirds of leading economists said that the concentrated power of companies does not explain the current rash of inflation.

New York University economist Thomas Philippon has welcomed the administration's approach — while allowing it would do little to bring down prices. As the author of the 2019 book, "The Great Reversal: How America Gave Up on Free Markets," Philippon is the source of the administration's statement that market concentration places a \$5,000 drag on an average family.

What Philippon observed was that other nations had embraced a level of antitrust enforcement and competition that no longer exists in America, resulting in lower costs for cell phone service, internet and airline tickets in Europe relative to the U.S.

"As a way to fight current inflation, it is unlikely to have a big impact in the short term, but it can still be useful," Philippon said.



President Joe Biden speaks about prescription drug costs at the Daniel Technology Center of Germanna Community College — Culpeper Campus, Thursday, Feb. 10, 2022, in Culpeper, Va.

Associated Press

"I think of it more as a positive side effect of something that should be done in any case." The Biden administration contends that even if the lack of competition didn't directly trigger the recent spike in prices, it has contributed to inflation. The White House Council of Economic Advisers blogged in July about how more sectors of the economy are effectively controlled by a smaller number of companies.

It cited studies that show how mergers led to higher prices for hospital services, health insurance, airline tickets and beer. It also documented a decline in government reviews of mergers and noted that the 2020 federal lawsuits against Google and, separately, Facebook were the first major monopolization cases in 22 years.

After the second meeting of the government-wide competition council in late January, the White House charted its progress. The Food and Drug Administration has proposed selling hearing aids over-the-counter, "lowering their cost from thousands of dollars to hundreds of dollars," according to a White House statement. The Federal Trade Commission will increase enforcement against restrictions that companies place on

people repairing their own electronic devices. The Transportation Department figures it can cut prices of airline tickets in the New York City area by opening up 16 slots to a low-cost carrier at the airport in Newark, New Jersey.

For proof that more competition can lead to lower prices, administration officials cite the example of eyeglasses. Before 1979, people could only buy eyeglasses from doctors who wrote their prescriptions. The FTC then passed a rule that forced doctors to give out prescriptions, causing the average price of glasses to fall 30.4% to \$178 (in 1979 dollars).

The issue does not break cleanly along partisan lines. Republican Sens. Todd Young of Indiana and Kevin Cramer of North Dakota have sponsored a bill to limit companies from using non-compete agreements, which can keep workers from going to another employer for more money. But many in the business sector dispute Biden's core premise that the U.S. economy has become less competitive. They argue that mergers allow companies to operate more efficiently and the resulting gains in productivity benefit consumers.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce says market concen-

tration had waned by 2017 and it intends to challenge some of the administration's regulatory actions in court. Airlines for America, a trade association, says that consumers are better off under industry consolidation. In inflation-adjusted terms, it said, the average price of a roundtrip ticket has fallen nearly \$100 since 2010 to \$306 in 2020.

The Business Roundtable, a group representing CEOs, said that at a time of high inflation "more burdensome government regulations are not what the economy or Americans need."

Despite the pandemic and inflation, companies have still found ways to achieve historic profits. Corporate profits after tax equaled 11.8% of the total U.S. economy in the second quarter of last year, the highest share on record going back to 1947. The Biden administration is arguing that government policy can ensure that more of that money goes to workers and customers.

The fact that the Biden administration is focused on corporate profits and structure could ultimately limit how much companies can charge and that could deter some inflation, said Barry Lynn, executive director of the Open Markets Institute. □

I do, I do, I do: Mass Valentine's wedding at Florida museum

By TERRY SPENCER

Associated Press

PALM BEACH, Fla., (AP) —

Shackeem Frankson is the quintessential burly prison guard, but when he turned Monday to exchange wedding vows with his longtime girlfriend, Sarah Horton, he had to pause to wipe away the tear that trickled down his cheek.

But no worries — the other eight couples exchanging their own vows at a mass Valentine's Day wedding outside one of Florida's most historic mansions were probably too busy to notice.

"It's all right to be emotional today," said Frankson, his bride giggling at him being busted, after the ceremony arranged by Palm Beach County Court Clerk Joseph Abruzzo and his staff.

Appropriately, the group ceremony took place on the south lawn of Whitehall, the 75-room, 100,000-square-foot (9,290-square meter) waterside retreat that oil and railroad tycoon Henry Flagler built as a wedding present for his third wife, Mary Lily Kenan Flagler. The Flaglers wintered there beginning in 1902, and it is now the centerpiece of the Flagler Museum. Historians say it cost \$4 million (\$110 million today) to build. It typically costs \$15,000 to get married there, but on this day the only cost was the \$86 license fee.

And it was a bright, sunny



Arielle Agnelli and Bryan Arvesu head to a photo shoot after being married during a Valentine's Day group wedding ceremony, Monday, Feb. 14, 2022, outside the Flagler Museum in Palm Beach, Fla.

Associated Press

but chilly for a South Florida morning (62 degrees Fahrenheit, or 17 degrees Celsius) as the couples gathered outside the gates of the two-story neoclassical mansion, its white columns overlooking the crowd. The brides, all in white dresses, stood with their grooms, mostly dressed in dark suits or tuxes. The women were given red long-stem roses; the men were pinned with rose boutonnieres.

Bride-to-be Diana Garcia waited with her fiancé, retail manager Sergio Mena, about to culminate their two months of engagement. They met in middle school about a dozen

years ago, but only started dating two years ago. They have a 1-year-old son. Garcia — or Diana Mena as you are reading this — signed up the couple after seeing it promoted on the clerk's website. It "would be really cool" to get married on Valentine's Day at such a historic venue.

"It is a special destination — and not at the courthouse," said Diana Mena, a housekeeper.

For Frankson and the former Ms. Horton, who waited nearby, the ceremony ended a five-year engagement — "we just kept putting it off," she said. They met online seven years

ago.

Sarah Frankson, an accounts manager, said she had seen a local TV news story that the clerk's office was seeking couples for the ceremony, so she signed them up and they were picked. They'd sorta started planning a wedding a couple years ago, but then the COVID-19 pandemic began and it got pushed aside until this opportunity arose.

"It is different," she said. Frankson added another benefit — there was none of the "hassle" of planning a more traditional wedding. The downside — no families were allowed, in-

cluding the Franksons' 5-year-old son, but they could watch the ceremony on Facebook and many had plans for luncheons or receptions after.

Soon, the clerk and museum staff escorted the couples onto the grounds, where Abruzzo awaited them on the portico. The brides were taken stage right, the grooms stage left, then brought back together as recorded violins played.

As the couples stood under stately palm trees with yachts bobbing in the Intra-coastal Waterway behind them, Abruzzo presented their vows. He asked them to recite that they would not only love and cherish each other, but give their new spouse "all of my tomorrows." For Arielle Agnelli, whose long dress train flowed behind her, and Bryan Arvesu, the ceremony replaced the 150-person one they canceled in August 2020 because of the pandemic. As they waited in the reception area to receive their wedding certificate, they held close when asked what they thought of the ceremony.

"It was amazing and wonderful," the newly christened Arielle Agnelli-Arvesu said.

They knew they had something special when they met eight years ago at a friend's house — "the second I saw her," he said. □

Jill Biden turns Valentine's Day into lesson for 2nd graders

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Jill Biden has turned Valentine's Day into a lesson for second graders.

The first lady and longtime teacher had Washington elementary school students design Valentine's Day hearts that are hanging in the East Wing of the White House.

Twenty second graders from Aiton Elementary School and their teacher, Alejandro Diasgranados, also toured the White House

on Monday and saw their "heart work" on display. It was the first time many of these students have been to the White House, Biden's office said.

The first lady also took the group to the North Lawn to see her Valentine's Day installation: hand-painted, wooden artwork in the shapes of the Bidens' puppy, Commander, and cat, Willow. There's also a separate heart-shaped cut-out inscribed with 1 Corinthians 13:13, "Three things will last forever — faith, hope and

love — and the greatest of these is love."

The students cheered loudly as their school bus pulled up to the mansion, where a White House aide greeted them as they hopped off. Commander barked as they entered the building. "That's the paparazzi!" shouted one boy as he pointed toward journalists who had gathered to witness the arrival.

Group photos were taken both inside and outside the White House, and the first lady sent the students on



First lady Jill Biden poses for a photo with Aiton Elementary School students and staff as she welcomes school children to the White House in Washington, Monday, Feb. 14, 2022, to celebrate Valentine's Day.

Associated Press

their way with White House cookies. She was heard apologizing to one of the

adults chaperoning the group for giving sugar to the children. □

Expert takes issue with officers' conduct in Floyd killing

By AMY FORLITI and
STEVE KARNOWSKI
Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — A use-of-force expert testified Monday in the federal trial against three former Minneapolis police officers who are charged with violating George Floyd's civil rights, saying their conduct was "inconsistent" with generally accepted policing practices, but a defense attorney questioned the quality of his analysis.

Tim Longo, the police chief at the University of Virginia at Charlottesville, said he reviewed videos, Minneapolis Police Department policies, training materials and other items to evaluate the conduct of J. Alexander Kueng, Thomas Lane and Tou Thao.

The officers are charged with violating Floyd's constitutional rights while acting under government authority. All three are accused of depriving Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man, of medical care while he was handcuffed, facedown as Officer Derek Chauvin pressed his knee onto Floyd's neck for 9 1/2 minutes. Kueng knelt on Floyd's back and Lane held down his legs while Thao kept bystanders back.

Kueng and Thao are also accused of failing to intervene to stop the May 25, 2020, killing, which triggered protests worldwide and a reexamination of racism and policing.

The charges allege that the



This combination of photos provided by the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office in Minnesota on June 3, 2020, shows, from left, former Minneapolis police officers J. Alexander Kueng, Thomas Lane and Tou Thao.

officers' actions resulted in Floyd's death.

Longo testified that officers are allowed to use only as much force as is proportionate to the level of resistance they are encountering, and they are required to stop using force when resistance stops. They are also required to try to de-escalate situations. Longo said he found no reason to put Floyd on the ground, and that once Floyd was there, he wasn't resisting and was not a threat.

Longo said an officer's "duty of care" for people in custody "is absolute" because they are restrained and cannot care for themselves. He also said an of-

ficer has a duty to take "affirmative steps" to stop another officer from using excessive force.

"The term intervene is a verb, it's an action word. And it requires an act. And what you do is, you stop the behavior," he said.

Longo testified that when it comes to a duty to provide medical aid, the actions of Thao and Kueng were inconsistent with generally accepted policing practices. He said Thao "didn't do anything" and Kueng took no further action after checking Floyd's pulse, and finding none.

Longo said that when Lane gave chest compressions to Floyd in an ambulance,

he was fulfilling his duty to provide medical aid. But, he said, that does not apply to what happened before that point, when no aid was given.

Thao's attorney, Thomas Plunkett, suggested that Longo reviewed only materials that prosecutors "cherry picked" for him and didn't look further. He pressed a defense theme that the Minneapolis Police Department bears responsibility for Floyd's killing for training its officers poorly.

Plunkett played part of a training presentation that showed violent confrontations between officers and subjects, with audio of a locker room speech given

by actor Al Pacino, playing a coach in the 1999 football movie "Any Given Sunday," exhorting his players to fight "inch by inch" because it will make the difference between winning and losing — and living and dying.

Plunkett said the video is the last thing recruits see in their use-of-force training and asked if it was consistent with accepted police policies and practices. Longo replied that he found the video "very disturbing," because of its images of people dying and getting hurt, but that he didn't know the context in which it was presented.

Prosecutors began presenting their case on Jan. 24 and said late Friday that they expected to rest Monday. Defense attorneys will then start presenting witnesses. The attorney for Lane has said his client will testify. Attorneys for Thao and Kueng haven't said if they will.

The trial has included testimony from bystanders, doctors, police officers, an FBI agent and others. Prosecutors also have played bystander and body camera videos that show Floyd being restrained and eventually becoming motionless before being put into an ambulance.

Despite efforts to keep the case on track, Judge Paul Magnuson ordered a three-day pause after one of the defendants tested positive for COVID-19. □



People hold signs during a rally in response to the killing of Christina Yuna Lee in the Chinatown section of New York, Monday, Feb. 14, 2022.

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A woman was stabbed to death

inside her lower Manhattan apartment by a man who

Woman killed by man who followed her into NYC apartment

followed her from the street into her building, authorities said. Christina Yuna Lee, 35, was found fatally wounded in her bathtub at about 4:30 a.m. Sunday, police said. The suspected killer was taken into custody after he at first tried to flee down a fire escape and then barricaded himself inside the apartment, a police spokesperson said.

Police announced Monday that Assamad Nash, 25, was arrested on charg-

es of murder and burglary. It wasn't clear if he had an attorney who could comment on the charges.

Officials including New York Gov. Kathy Hochul and New York City Mayor Eric Adams denounced Lee's killing as the latest in a string of unprovoked attacks on people of Asian descent.

"I join New Yorkers standing together in support of our AAPI friends & neighbors," Hochul said on Twitter.

Police have not classi-

fied Lee's death as a hate crime, but Adams said the police are investigating and added, "we stand with our Asian community today."

Lee worked as a senior creative producer at Splice, an online platform for digital music. She was a graduate of Rutgers University and had previously worked for companies including Marriott and the shoe retailer Toms, according to her LinkedIn page. □

Trudeau mulls invoking emergency powers to quell protests

By **ROB GILLIES** and **TED SHAFFREY**

Associated Press

OTTAWA, Ontario (AP) —

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government weighed whether to invoke emergency powers Monday to quell the protests by demonstrators who have paralyzed Ottawa and blocked border crossings in anger over the country's COVID-19 restrictions.

The prime minister met virtually with the leaders of Canada's provinces during the day and planned to address the nation Monday night.

"This is the biggest, greatest, most severe test Trudeau has faced," said Wesley Wark, a University of Ottawa professor and national security expert.

For more than two weeks, hundreds and sometimes thousands of protesters in trucks and other vehicles have clogged the streets of Ottawa, the capital, railing against vaccine mandates for truckers and other COVID-19 precautions and condemning Trudeau's Liberal government.

Members of the self-styled Freedom Convoy have also blockaded various U.S.-Canadian border crossings, though the busi-



Don Stephens, 65, a retired graphic designer, holds a sign on Parliament Hill to support trucks lined up in protest of COVID-19 vaccine mandates and restrictions in Ottawa, Ontario, on Saturday, Feb. 12, 2022.

Associated Press

est and most important the Ambassador Bridge connecting Windsor, Ontario, to Detroit — was reopened on Sunday after police arrested the last of the demonstrators and broke the nearly week-long siege that had disrupted auto production in both countries.

In recent days, the prime minister rejected calls to use the military but said "all options are on the table" to end the protests, including

invoking the Emergencies Act, which gives the government broad powers.

"Our government is prepared to do what is required to uphold the rule of law and to restore order in our communities and in particular to protect critical infrastructure, particularly at our borders," Emergency Preparedness Minister Bill Blair said when asked Monday about whether the Emergencies Act should be invoked.

In other developments, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police said they arrested 11 people at the blockaded border crossing at Coutts, Alberta, opposite Montana, after learning of a cache of guns and ammunition.

Police said a small group within the protest was said to have a "willingness to use force against the police if any attempts were made to disrupt the blockade." Authorities seized 13

long guns, handguns, sets of body armor, a machete, a large quantity of ammunition and high-capacity magazines.

"This is extremely concerning," he said. "There is, at least in that case, a small cell of people who wanted to take this in a very dangerous and dark direction." Over the past weeks, authorities have hesitated to move against the protesters around the country. Local officials cited a lack of police manpower and fears of violence, while provincial and federal authorities disagreed over who had responsibility for quelling the unrest.

Invoking the Emergencies Act would allow the federal government to declare the Ottawa protest illegal and clear it out by such means as towing vehicles, Wark said.

It would also enable the government to make greater use of the Mounties, the federal police agency. An earlier version of the Emergencies Act, called the War Measures Act, was used just once during peacetime, by Trudeau's late father, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, to deal with a militant Quebec independence movement in 1970. □

Poland's plan to gift Orban precious document draws scorn

WARSAW, Poland (AP) —

Local authorities and officials in central Poland on Monday protested government plans to gift Hungary one of the country's most precious manuscripts that dates back 500 years in order to highlight the two nations' close ties.

Torun city leaders and church authorities signed a petition urging lawmakers to abandon the plan to give away the 15th century document authored by Naldus Naldus, a writer and painter from Florence. "We have the opinion of experts who say that this move would be against the constitution," said Regional Governor Piotr Całbecki. "I think we should appeal to

the hearts of the lawmakers and to their conscience. There is no room for politics here." A historian and law-

maker with Poland's right-wing ruling party, Piotr Babinetz, has proposed legislation that would enable the

government to take possession of the manuscript for sum of 25 million zlotys (\$6.2 million) and give it to the government of Prime Minister Viktor Orban.

The gesture would aim to underscore the close relations between the two nations and governments as well as to reciprocate for Hungary's decision to hand over last year a gilded suit of armor of the 16th century Polish king Sigismund II Augustus.

Naldus Naldus crafted the elaborately decorated manuscript while serving at the court of Hungary's King Matthias Corvinus.

The book, which describes the Hungarian king's library, was sold by a merchant to

the city of Torun in the mid 16th century and it has remained there ever since.

Danetta Ryszkowska-Mirowska, head of the Torun public library, described the manuscript as "unique and priceless" and said that no amount of money could compensate its loss for Poland's cultural heritage.

She joined other library officials to protest the plan she called "bizarre" and contrary to Poland's national heritage protection laws. Poland lost much of its cultural heritage - particularly from its art and book collections - throughout its history, but especially during the bombings and plunder of World War II. □



A unique 15th century ornamented manuscript on parchment is seen in a library in Torun, Poland, on Monday, Feb. 14, 2022.

Associated Press

Madagascar, southern Africa brace for more tropical storms

By WANJOHI KABUKURU

Associated Press

MOMBASA, Kenya (AP) —

Even as southern African nations assess the devastation caused earlier this month by Cyclone Batsirai, a new tropical storm is approaching as the Indian Ocean region is confronted by an intense cyclone season.

Tropical Storm Dumako is projected to slam into the northeastern coast of Madagascar Tuesday evening, according to the U.N.'s regional meteorology center in Reunion. Dumako, the fourth storm this year, is forecast to make landfall in northeastern Madagascar and the areas of Sava, Analanjirofo and Toamasina are on alert.

About eight to 12 more cyclones may hit southern Africa and nearby islands in the Indian Ocean before the cyclone season ends in May, part of an increase in recent years of extreme tropical storms in the Southern Hemisphere, according to the U.N. Meteorological Organization.

Southern Africa was warned to prepare for "more high-impact tropical cyclones, coastal flooding and intense rainfall linked to cli-



People stand outside a ruined home in Mananjary, Madagascar Thursday, Feb. 10, 2022.

Associated Press

mate change" by the meteorological organization after Cyclone Idai caused massive destruction and hundreds of deaths in Mozambique and neighboring countries in 2019.

Madagascar is still counting the toll of Batsirai, which left 121 people dead earlier in February, according to official figures, and destroyed many buildings and roads. Just weeks before, in January, Tropical Storm Ana claimed 58 lives and displaced 130,000 people on

Madagascar and caused further destruction in Mozambique and Malawi.

"In the last few years we have noted more warming of the oceans. This change in climatic patterns in the Indian Ocean normally leads to an increase of cyclones in the southwestern part," Evans Mukolwe, an African meteorological expert who is a consultant for the U.N.'s intergovernmental authority on climate prediction.

"Climate change is having severe impacts on Af-

rica," he said. Mukolwe echoes the alerts given late last year by the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change which warned of dire weather-related hazards for Africa's islands and coastal nations. Madagascar was projected to face frequent arid spells and droughts while at the same time be hammered by strong tropical cyclones. This paradoxical pattern of droughts and cyclones is exactly what the Indian Ocean island has

suffered so far this year.

Tropical storms have battered eastern Madagascar and the central capital, Antananarivo, even as the southeastern part of the island experienced its worst drought in 40 years, according to the World Food Program. The agency appealed for urgent food aid for more than 1.1 million people in southern Madagascar in the Anosy and Androy regions.

Africa's islands and coastal cities are at risk of more extreme weather in the coming years, according to the U.N.'s intergovernmental panel on climate change. Slightly more than 50 major African cities are exposed to severe climate-related threats posed by sea level and air temperatures rise, the panel warned in a report.

"Sea level rise coupled with storm surges and waves will exacerbate coastal inundation and the potential for increased saltwater intrusion into aquifers," said the report.

The surface of the Indian Ocean has warmed faster than the global average which is forecast to give rise to more cyclones and more droughts. □

UK firm on Chagos Islands claim after Mauritius plants flag

By JILL LAWLESS

Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The British government reaffirmed its sovereignty over a remote Indian Ocean archipelago on Monday after Mauritius underlined its own territorial claim by planting a flag on the islands. Officials planted the red, blue, yellow and green flag of Mauritius on the Peros Banhos atoll in the Chagos Islands, whose residents were expelled by Britain half a century ago to make way for a U.S. military base.

Several Chagos islanders accompanied Mauritian officials on a voyage that also involved a scientific survey of a nearby coral reef. It was the first time they had set foot there

since Britain evicted about 2,000 residents in the 1960s and 70s so the U.S. military could build an air base on Diego Garcia, one of the islands. The Guardian reported that a message from Mauritius Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth was played at the flag-raising, hailing the "historic visit."

"The message I wish to give out to the world, as the state with sovereignty over the Chagos archipelago, is that we will ensure a wise stewardship of its territory over its maritime security, conservation of the marine environment and human rights, notably the return of those of Chagossian origin," he was quoted as saying. Britain's Foreign Office said Monday that the U.K.

"has no doubt as to our sovereignty over the British Indian Ocean Territory, which we have held continuously since 1814."

"Mauritius has never held sovereignty over the territory and the U.K. does not recognize its claim," it said in a statement. The displaced residents have fought for years in the courts for the right to return to their home islands, which the U.K. calls the British Indian Ocean Territory. In 2019 the International Court of Justice and the United Nations General Assembly both told Britain to give up control of the islands, which it held on to after Mauritius gained independence in 1968. The international court said in a non-binding opinion



Protesters hold banners outside the World Court in The Hague, Netherlands, Monday, Sept. 3, 2018, where judges listen to arguments in a case on whether Britain illegally maintains sovereignty over the Chagos Islands.

Associated Press

that Britain had unlawfully carved up Mauritius, an archipelago nation whose main island is some 2,000 kilometers (1,200 miles) off the southeast coast of Africa. Successive British gov-

ernments have expressed regret about the way the islanders were removed but have not allowed them to return or heeded the non-binding international opinions. □

Mexican president sees conspiracy behind avocado ban

By **MARK STEVENSON**

Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico's president said Monday the U.S. suspension on avocado imports and recent environmental complaints are part of a conspiracy against his country by political or economic interests. President Andrés Manuel López Obrador put forward the conspiracy theory after the U.S. suspended imports of Mexican avocados on the eve of the Super Bowl following a threat against a U.S. plant safety inspector in Mexico.

In fact, the U.S. measure was due to years of worries that drug cartel violence in the western Mexico state of Michoacan where gangs extort money from avocado growers by threatening to kidnap and kill them has spilled over to threats against U.S. inspectors. López Obrador on one hand downplayed the measure, saying avocados for game day itself had already been shipped north and consumed. "The truth, the Mexican avocados have already been exported," he said at his daily news briefing. "They already enjoyed the avocados."

On the other hand, he said producers who wanted



Avocados are displayed for sale at Michoacan market in Mexico City, Monday, Feb. 14, 2022.

Associated Press

to compete with Mexican products, or political factors, played a role in the decision.

"In all of this there are also a lot of political interests and political interests, there is competition; they don't want Mexican avocados to get into the United States, right, because it would rule in the United States because of its quality," López Obrador said.

He did not explain what those interests were, but

noted ominously, "There are other countries that are interested in selling avocados, as in the case of other farm products, so they lobby, they look for senators, professional public (relations) people and agencies, to put up obstacles."

In fact, the U.S. grows about half the avocados it consumes and to protect domestic orchards from pests, inspects imported avocados nearly 90% of which came from Mexico

in recent years.

It was only in 1997 that the U.S. lifted a ban on Mexican avocados that had been in place since 1914 to prevent a range of weevils, scabs and pests from entering U.S. orchards.

The inspectors work for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services. On Saturday, the U.S. government suspended all imports of Mexican avocados "until further notice" after

one of those inspectors in Mexico received a threatening message.

Mexico's Agriculture Department said in a statement that "U.S. health authorities ... made the decision after one of their officials, who was carrying out inspections in Uruapan, Michoacan, received a threatening message on his official cellphone," the department wrote.

Avocado growers in Mexico have been the victims of drug cartel turf battles and extortion in the western state of Michoacan, the only state in Mexico fully authorized to export to the U.S. market. After a similar incident in 2019, the USDA warned Mexico it would suspend the program if the inspectors' safety wasn't guaranteed. But the avocado ban was just the latest of several actual or potential sanctions last week on Mexican exports stemming from the Mexican government's inability to rein in illegal activities.

On Thursday, the U.S. Trade Representative's Office filed an environmental complaint against Mexico for failing to stop illegal fishing to protect the critically endangered vaquita marina, the world's smallest porpoise. □

Trump, Pence speak at global forum held in South Korea

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) —

Former U.S. President Donald Trump has criticized the Biden administration over its handling of North Korea, at an event in South Korea that included as a guest speaker former Vice-President Mike Pence.

Several former leaders and top officials participated virtually or in-person at the weekend event in Seoul jointly sponsored by the Cambodian government and the Universal Peace Federation, an organization linked to the South Korea-based Unification Church, a religious group known for its mass weddings and global business and media interests.

Pence, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen and for-

mer U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon were among those who attended the event and spoke in person. Trump appeared in a recorded video message that was screened on Sunday at the forum.

He alleged that a recent "return to escalation" that has seen North Korean leader Kim Jong Un launch missile tests would "never have happened if I were president."

He also urged North Korea not to undertake any actions that could "endanger" what he described as the "unique opportunity that we worked so hard to create together over the past four years."

The North resumed tests of shorter-range weapons

threatening U.S. ally South Korea while Trump was in office in 2019.

The year before, Kim had unilaterally suspended the testing of nuclear explosives and intercontinental-range ballistic missiles.

Trump met Kim three times during his presidency.

Their diplomacy never recovered from the collapse of their second meeting in February 2019, when the Americans rejected North Korean demands for a major release of U.S.-led sanctions in exchange for a partial surrender of its nuclear capabilities.

North Korea kicked off 2020 with ramped-up testing activity, conducting seven rounds of missile launches in January alone.



Then U.S. President Donald Trump, left, meets with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un at the North Korean side of the border at the village of Panmunjom in Demilitarized Zone, on June 30, 2019.

Associated Press

Experts say the North could increase weapons demonstrations after its ally China finishes hosting the Winter Olympics in Beijing, as it attempts to move the

needle with the Biden administration, which has offered open-ended talks but shown no willingness to budge on sanctions. □

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Article by Etnia Nativa

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Iguanas

Episode CXLII - 142

The word "iguana" is derived from the original Arawak name for the species, iuwana. In addition to the two species in the genus Iguana, several other related genera in the same family have common names of the species including the word "iguana".

They are a genus of herbivorous lizards native to tropical areas of Mexico, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. Two species are placed in the genus, the green iguana, which is widespread throughout its range and a popular pet, and the Lesser Antillean iguana, which is native to the Lesser Antilles. Iguanas can range from 5 to 6 ft in length, including their tails. These lizards possess a dewlap and a row of elongated scales running from the midline of their necks down to their tails. Iguanas have varying types of scales covering different areas of their body, for example, some large, round tuberculate scales are scattered around the lateral region of the neck among smaller, overlapping scales. The scales on the dorsal trunk of their bodies are also thicker and more tightly packed than those on the ventral sides. These scales may be a variety of colors and are not always visible from close distances. They have a large, round scale on their cheeks known as a subtympenic shield. Iguanas have keen vision and their visual acuity enables to locate food. They employ visual signals to communicate with other members of the same species. The tympanum, the iguana's eardrum, is located above the subtympenic shield behind each eye. Iguanas are often hard to spot, as they tend to blend into their surroundings, and their coloration enables them to hide from larger predators.

Like most reptiles, they muscles are fast twitch and allows iguanas to move very quickly. Iguanas are really fast and are known to run even at a speed of 21 miles per hour at their maximum. They can run really fast and are known to escape easily by running and with the help of their parietal eye to identify the predator and this also helps them to catch their prey. They generally



live near water and are excellent swimmers. If threatened, they will leap from a branch, often from great heights, and escape with a splash to the water below. Iguanas themselves are eaten by a variety of natural predators—hawks, owls, snakes—and humans. Green iguanas are bred and raised on farms in Central and South America to be eaten by people. Young iguanas are particularly vulnerable to predation by feral cats, and no iguana is safe from a pack of dogs. The Iguana is considered a delicacy in some latitudes, there is a complete menu with its meat being a typical dish of some regions of Central America, Mexico, Colombia and Venezuela among other countries including our own island. Its meat is equal to chicken while some say that its flavor is like of rabbit meat and its skin is used to make handicrafts.

In Aruba, iguana soup is well known, mainly for being a rich source of protein and recommended when suffering from the flu or physical weakness. It is also attributed aphrodisiac properties. Its legal protection has caused many problems and great damage to residential as well as communities ornamental gardens as well as to agriculture area.

Iguanas may make fun pets if an iguana

is raised correctly by their owners, and they get their basic needs met, they will be perfectly happy to be handled by people. They often grow to like having their little heads rubbed when things are quiet and calm. This is often the closest that their owners see true affection from their iguanas. They aren't dangerous or aggressive to humans, but they damage landscape foliage and can dig lengthy tunnels and the bite from an adult iguana can actually bite the top of your finger off, or tear chunks of flesh off, they have a row of small sharp teeth on the top and bottom of their mouths and can inflict a nasty wound with a whip of their barbed tail in defence. □

About Etnia Nativa

Our goal is to raise cultural awareness, promote education and safeguard our heritage as the sacred mother seed guiding you to be the next guardian of the island. If you love Aruba its origins and its cultural heritage, be part of the exclusive visitors of this cozy home-atelier called "Etnia Nativa". This private residential houses collections of native art, archaeological artifacts and historic furniture, while the facilities themselves are the result of the transformation of recycled materials. Meet this acclaimed columnist, artist and native cultural expert at home! Book your visit Whatsapp + 297 592 2702- or mail: etnianativa03@gmail.com



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First International "Sustainable Air Transportation" Convention

ORANJESTAD – The Minister of Tourism and Public Health Dangui Oduber announced the first international Sustainable Air Transportation convention held in November 2022.

In April 2012, 6 airport CEO/Managing Directors of the Dutch Caribbean (Dutch Caribbean Cooperation of Airports (DCCA) signed an agreement to promote sustainable and stable air transport with more af-

fordable fares and better connections between the islands in the Dutch Caribbean.

This event is a combination of a seminar and workshop and has a duration of 1 week.

This joint effort should lead to more island hopping tourism, stimulate the labor market, stimulate medical care and improve the social networks. There will also be a presentation about the future alternatives in transportation.

On the agenda of the Sustainable Air Transportation event are;

1. Electrical and other sustainable technological developments and alternatives in the aviation world other than fossil fuels.
2. The opportunities to do

business and the challenges to make airports and airlines more sustainable.

3. The available options to improve inter-island connections
- 4.

This event fits right in the Government's policy to promote Sustainable Development Goals. It serves our tourism and improves the connection, and reduces the rates.

The Minister wishes the DCCA success with this important international event. □

Aruba Ports Authority makes 1,6 million investment for Mega Cruise Ships



ORANJESTAD – On February 10, 2022, the Minister of Tourism Dangui Oduber and the Director of the Aruba Ports Authority Marc Figaroa announced the dredging project that will initiate in the same week.

Dredging is the excavation of material from the bottom of the ocean to improve existing water features such as navigability at the port.

It is essential for the Cruise tourism of Aruba as this will make it possible to accommodate mega cruise ships at the port. One of the Mega Cruise ships is the Royal Caribbean Cruise line "Oasis Class", which will bring thousands of visitors to Aruba.

The 1.6 million florin investment will take two weeks from start to finish, and they are estimated to dredge around 20 thousand metric cubes of sand and dirt from the bottom of the canal.

This is a joint effort of a local group of Varadero and a Canadian company named Ocean Group. The dredging will

be carried out with due observance of the agreements with the Department of Nature and Environment (DNM); making sure the environment is not affected.

Cruise tourism is one of the most affected sectors by the pandemic, and it wasn't until June 2021 that Aruba welcomed the first cruise ship after the lockdown. Cruise tourism has seen a slow start but is gradually improving. By 2021, Aruba welcomed 136 thousand cruise visitors in 96 calls, a 16% recovery compared to 2019, in which we received 830 thousand cruise visitors.

The forecast for 2022 is around 500 thousand visitors, representing a 60% recovery compared to 2019. This forecast has been somewhat affected due to the Omicron variant that caused many cancellations in the first three weeks of January 2022.

According to the Minister, the Aruba Ports Authority will continue investing in the upgrade of cruise tourism. □

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Travellers' Choice 2020

AHATA: January's RevPAR was 45% less than in 2019

ORANJESTAD — The Aruba Hotel & Tourism Association has released the most recent hotel performance results for January and an updated projection for the coming months.

JANUARY 2022 DATA:

- **Occupancy:** The occupancy rate was 48%, which is a 55% recovery compared to January 2019. Occupancy was projected at 76%, however, the recent COVID wave caused a 37% drop in reservations.

	Actual	Occupancy Forecast 12.05.21	% Drop
January	48%	76%	-37%

- **ADR:** The average daily rate for occupied rooms was \$356.84, which is almost the same as in 2019.
- **RevPAR:** The revenue per available room was 45% less than in 2019, at \$172.12

OCCUPANCY FORECAST:

The hotel sector's forecast is a primary indicator of the expected economic recovery for Aruba. AHATA projects a recovery of 84% for the average hotel occupancy in 2022.

	Occupancy Forecast	Recovery compared to 2019
February	61%	66%
March	65%	73%
April	74%	90%
2022	71%	84%



TIMESHARE

AHATA's Timeshare properties also experienced cancellations in January and ended up with a 75% average rate of occupancy.

AHATA member hotels: Amsterdam Manor Beach Resort, Barceló Aruba, Boardwalk Boutique Hotel, Brickell Bay Beach Club, Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort, Courtyard by Marriott, Divi & Tamarijn All-Inclusive, Eagle Aruba Resort, Holiday Inn Resort Aruba, Hyatt Regency Aruba, Hyatt Place Aruba Airport, Manchebo Beach Resort, Marriott Aruba & Stellaris Casino, Paradera Park, Radisson Blu Aruba, Renaissance Aruba Resort, The Ritz-Carlton Aruba, RIU Palace Aruba, RIU Palace Antillas, Talk of the Town Hotel.

AHATA member timeshares: Divi Aruba Phoenix, Divi Dutch Village, Divi Village Golf, La Cabana, Marriott Ocean Club, Marriott Surf Club. □



EAGLE BEACH — Ike's bistro at Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa surprises with an excellent, tasteful and varied vegan menu. Executive Chef Sandro Herold is obviously enthusiastic about the new offerings that fill up the place already. "People nowadays are a bit more conscious about what they eat. This menu offers a wide variety with creative vegan food items." We asked some of the guests about their experience: "delicious", "very tasty" "great food, great setting". Even teens, in general not too fond of health food, applauded the offerings. "We did not even miss the meat". Of course the restaurant also offers their extensive regular menu for the non-vegan guests containing all you wish From the Land or From the Sea.

Vegan is hot now, says the chef, and we had that confirmed by several guests. Ike's Bistro is an open air restaurant, located in the Man-

Ike's Bistro unveils vegan smorgasbord

chebo Beach Resort & Spa. Under a huge cabana with a view to the romantically lit pool of the resort you are seated in relaxed chairs and served by great waiters. And not unimportant: Covid-19 safe.

Your senses are tickled because of the purity and freshness of the food items. You may choose for the unknown which is a three-course vegan chef tasting menu that can also be combined with a wine pairing. Or you select your choices from the menu. All dishes are 100% Vegan and are gluten-free unless labeled otherwise. Start with appetizers like Vegan Fish Taco, Chickpeas Tartare and Avocado, Spicy Buffalo Cauliflower Wings or Vegetable Tempura. Tomato Basil Soup or Lemongrass Carrot Ginger Soup are simply delicious as are the Arugula Jackfruit Salad or Mesclun Salad. For the main course pick your pick: Sesame Ginger Duck (contains gluten), Stuffed Corn Chips and Avocado, Grilled Fish Filet and Roasted Cauliflower or Truffle Porcini Risotto & Grilled



Tofu. This heavenly healthy trip reaches its end destination with a scrumptious dessert: Caribbean Snickers, a must-try! All of those choices embrace your inner senses with their freshness and clear flavors.

Vegan might be on the menu in many restaurants nowadays as 'the other option', but here at Ike's Bistro they celebrate vegan and you get hooked, that is a promise. Passion, creativity, purity, dedication to a concept and a beautiful setting take care of an enchanting experience. Vegans and non-vegans are welcome, Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa has got it all covered.

Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa – Ike's Bistro
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Ikesbistro.com
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Liz Weston: What caring for an aging parent could cost you

By LIZ WESTON
of NerdWallet

Trying to work while caring for an aging loved one can be difficult, stressful and at times overwhelming. Many people feel they must quit, take a leave of absence or at least reduce their hours in order to cope.

Sometimes, caregivers have little choice. But often people don't realize the heavy financial toll they'll pay or adequately research options that could allow them to keep working, says Amy Goyer, AARP's national family and caregiving expert.

"When you're in a caregiving crisis, you can make a decision out of stress and fatigue and fear," Goyer says. "It's important to make work decisions and financial decisions from a more objective place."

CALCULATE THE COSTS

A 2020 AARP study found 61% of caregivers to adults were employed, and the majority had experienced at least one work-related impact. Most commonly that meant being late to work, having to leave early or taking time off, but caregivers also reported having to take unpaid leave or reduce their hours. One in 10 working caregivers quit or retired early.

Those who leave work don't just lose their current income. They also lose future raises, retirement contributions and company matches. Their future Social Security checks may be smaller, and many find they can't earn as much when they return to work because their skills are out of date. A few years out of the workforce AARP's study found the average caregiving period was 4 1/2 years can leave you hundreds of thousands of dollars poorer at retirement. Fidelity Investments has a "cost of leaving the workforce" calculator that can help you tally the potential impact. Fidelity is a NerdWallet partner.

INVESTIGATE THE ALTERNATIVES

Caregivers are less likely to quit if they have certain benefits at work, in-



This undated file photo provided by NerdWallet shows Liz Weston, a columnist for personal finance website NerdWallet.com.

cluding paid sick days or unpaid family leave, the AARP study found. Among the most helpful benefits for caregivers are flexible schedules, the ability to work from home and paid family leave, says Cecilia Shiner, research director for the LIMRA Secure Retirement Institute, an insurance industry research group.

Under federal law, you may be eligible for up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave in a 12-month period through the Family and Medical Leave Act to care for a child, spouse or parent (although not an

in-law or other relative). Eligible employees can keep their health insurance and return to the same or an equivalent job. Those caring for a veteran could be eligible for up to 26 weeks. You must have worked for the employer at least 1,250 hours in the 12 months prior to the leave, and the organization must employ at least 50 people within 75 miles of your work location, among other requirements. You also may be able to break up your leave, allowing you to take off one or two days per week, for example, says Goyer, author

of "Juggling Life, Work, and Caregiving."

Before quitting, you should ask what accommodations your employer is willing to offer, Goyer says. Just the ability to make personal calls at work can help caregivers trying to contact doctors or other professionals who aren't available after hours, she says.

SEEK HELP OUTSIDE WORK

Many communities offer affordable help that can make caretaking easier, such as Meals on Wheels, adult day care, senior companions, chore services, transportation and

respite care. Goyer recommends contacting a local Area Agency on Aging public or private nonprofit organizations that address the needs of older residents to ask what's available and to request an in-home assessment of your loved one's needs. The Department of Veterans Affairs has additional services for veterans, including "aid and attendance" benefits that provide home-based care. If your loved one is impoverished, they may qualify for in-home care at no cost to them through Medicaid, Goyer says. Some states even pay family members to provide such care. Check your state's Medicaid site for more information. "It's not a huge amount of money, but it's some income coming in to help offset the fact that you've cut back or stopped working," Goyer says. If you can afford one, a geriatric care manager could be another source of help. These professionals, who are often nurses or social workers, can assess your loved one's situation, find care options and be on call in case of emergency. Hourly fees often range from \$100 to \$250.

Other family members, friends and even neighbors may also be willing to help if asked. A relative who doesn't live close by could still help by paying bills or dealing with insurance companies, for instance. A neighbor could check in regularly and call you with any concerns.

Even if you do need to quit or reduce your working hours, doing this research can help you create a caregiving plan that details how you'll manage the day-to-day responsibilities, who will help you, where you can turn in an emergency and how you'll take care of your mental and emotional health, says Stacey Watson, head of Fidelity's life events planning. That alone can reduce your stress and help you feel more in control.

"Putting a plan in place can make a huge difference," Watson says. □

Associated Press

CROSSWORD

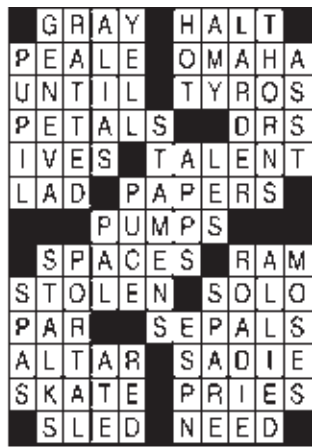
By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

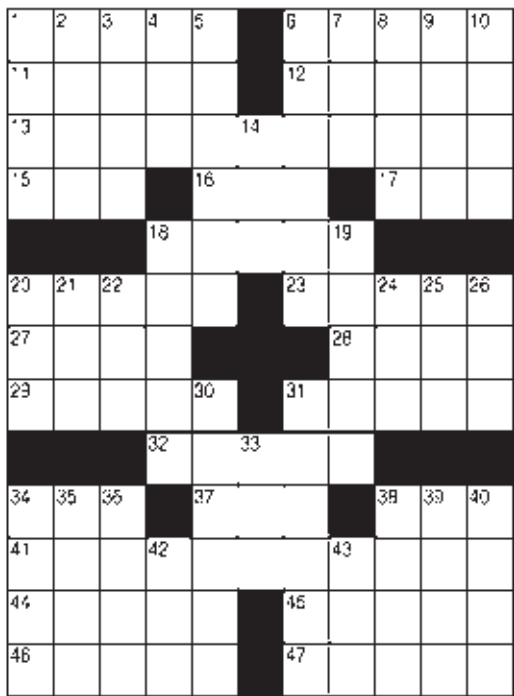
- 1 From the Arctic
- 6 Starts the bidding
- 11 Stand up
- 12 Scientist Curie
- 13 2005 Johnny Cash biopic
- 15 Shrewd
- 16 Feel poorly
- 17 Beanie or beret
- 18 Deadly snake
- 20 Kyoto setting
- 23 Stories
- 27 Skating jump
- 28 Goose egg
- 29 Poet's concern
- 31 Brewskis
- 32 Floor squares
- 34 School org.
- 37 Musician's job
- 38 TV spots
- 41 Cover all bases
- 44 Quartet doubled
- 45 Kagan of the Supreme Court
- 46 Onion layers
- 47 Casual eatery

DOWN

- 1 Hound's hands
- 2 Test type
- 3 Easter symbol
- 4 Invite
- 5 Keep
- 6 Brunch dish
- 7 Crony
- 8 Idle on film
- 9 Ship of 1492
- 10 Ooze
- 14 Femur's upper end
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- 38 Prayer ender
- 39 Frank Herbert classic
- 40 Flag feature
- 42 Number system base
- 43 — Baba



Yesterday's answer



2-15

AXYDLBAAXR
IS LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

2-15

CRYPTOQUOTE

D GNGHEILDUC, E CRUKGWR

UEXR, QDT DOHRS QEKR VDYU

EHHEXLC UDYCRZ NV FGWR

ESZ DOHRS NV WEYPQHRU!

— QDUXR

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: GIVE ME ONE FRIEND, JUST ONE, WHO MEETS THE NEEDS OF ALL MY VARYING MOODS. — ESTHER M. CLARK



A Zimbabwe National Parks official looks over the country's ivory stockpile at the Zimbabwe National Parks Headquarters in Harare, Zimbabwe on Thursday, June 2, 2016.

Associated Press

DNA analysis of elephant ivory reveals trafficking networks

By CHRISTINA LARSON

AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — As few as three major criminal groups are responsible for smuggling the vast majority of elephant ivory tusks out of Africa, according to a new study.

Researchers used analysis of DNA from seized elephant tusks and evidence such as phone records, license plates, financial re-

cords and shipping documents to map trafficking operations across the continent and better understand who was behind the crimes. The study was published Monday in the journal Nature Human Behavior. "When you have the genetic analysis and other data, you can finally begin to understand the illicit supply chain that's absolutely key to countering these

networks," said Louise Shelley, who researches illegal trade at George Mason University and was not involved in the research. Conservation biologist Samuel Wasser, a study co-author, hopes the findings will help law enforcement officials target the leaders of these networks instead of low-level poachers who are easily replaced by criminal organizations. □

Billionaire who flew SpaceX last year going back into orbit

By MARCIA DUNN

AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla.

(AP) — The billionaire who launched on his own SpaceX flight last year is headed back up, aiming for an even higher orbit.

Tech entrepreneur Jared Isaacman announced Monday that he will make another private spaceflight

launching from NASA's Kennedy Space Center. It will be the first of three crew SpaceX flights to try out new tech, culminating in the first flight of the company's new Starship with people on board.

Isaacman paid an undisclosed amount for a three-day spaceflight for himself and three others last Sep-

tember. On Monday, Isaacman said that he and Elon Musk's SpaceX are sharing costs for the upcoming flight but he would not provide details. Plans call for Isaacman and three others, including two SpaceX engineers and a retired Air Force pilot, to blast off aboard a Falcon rocket no earlier than November. They will circle Earth for up to five days, higher than any previous Dragon capsule the September flight reached more than 350 miles high (500 kilometers). This time, SpaceX will be shooting for more than 400 miles (640 kilometers) in order to pass through part of the Van Allen radiation belts surrounding Earth. □

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Aruba Airport	524 2424
American Airlines	582 2700
Avianca	588 0059
Jet Blue	588 2244
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AID FOUNDATIONS

FAVI- Visually Impaired
Tel. 582 5051

Alcoholics Anonymous
Tel. 736 2952

Narcotics Anonymous
Tel. 583 8989

Fundacion Contra Violencia
Relacional Tel. 583 5400

Centre for Diabetes
Tel. 524 8888

Child Abuse Prevention
Tel. 582 4433

Quota Club Tel. 525 2672

General Info

Phone Directory Tel. 118



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New fresh prince Jabari Banks is ready to conquer 'Bel-Air'

By ALICIA RANCILIO

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Jabari Banks knew he was close to getting the starring role of Will in "Bel-Air," the dramatic take of "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air," but his confidence started to wane when he was asked to do one more Zoom audition with show director Morgan Cooper.

"I'm like, 'I don't know what he wants to see, but I'm gonna give him everything I got,' recalled the 23-year-old in a recent interview. "I was like, 'I'm gonna put everything into this audition.'" Banks found a quiet place — a friend's closet — and logged in, only to see a very familiar face staring back at him, Will Smith.

"I didn't think it was real," Banks said. "He's like, 'I want to congratulate you. You got the part of Will in 'Bel-Air.'"

And then in true Smith exuberance, the superstar directed Banks to invite those with him to join the Zoom. "He was like, 'Where is everybody? Go get them,' said Banks. So a lot of my friends met Will."

And that's how Banks became the (new) prince of Bel-Air. The series is streaming on Peacock with a new episode on Thursdays.

Cooper says searching for the actor to play the new Will was not an easy task, and that he was looking "for a unicorn."

"Hundreds and hundreds



Jabari Banks poses for a portrait to promote the television series "Bel-Air," at The London Hotel in West Hollywood, Calif., on Feb. 8, 2022.

Associated Press

and hundreds of auditions poured in. We needed a guy who had the swagger, the charisma, but also the pure acting chops, who uses his eyes," he said. "Jabari Banks is such a star and he shines so bright." The parallels between Smith and Banks seem tailor-made for Hollywood. Like Smith, Banks is from west Philadelphia. He's also a musician working on his own EP, which he says is a mix of R&B, hip-hop and alternative genres, and plans to release it later this year. He also loves fashion and "The Fresh Prince" was a trend-setting show.

Banks says he's taking this huge opportunity "one day

at a time," and cites an anecdote from Smith's autobiography, "Will," about his father assigning him and his brother to build a wall brick by brick.

"I've been following that motto and going about my day to day like that," he said.

The series, now streaming on Peacock, was immediately given a two-season order. "Bel-Air" was conceived by Cooper, a filmmaker in Kansas City who taught himself to shoot film on a camera bought at Best Buy. He grew up loving "The Fresh Prince" and believed the premise of the show could still work today — but also reflect the times.

"If you remove the laugh track from the sitcom and really look at the scenario from a bird's eye view, the story really lends itself to drama. A young Black men from west Philadelphia gets into a scuffle and is forced to relocate across the country. What does that look like in modern day life? It lends itself to some really interesting dramatic moments that are rooted in very real conversations."

Cooper famously made a trailer for this idea using local actors and uploaded it to YouTube. Not even 24 hours later, Smith's production company, Westbrook, reached out for a meeting. Two weeks later Co-

per flew to Miami to meet Smith where he was filming "Bad Boys for Life." Things took off, two seasons were ordered, and the first three episodes dropped Sunday after the Super Bowl.

In "Bel-Air," a 16-year-old high school basketball star named Will is playing at a local court when he gets into a scuffle with a gang. The situation escalates quickly, and Will is arrested. Once he's released, his mother takes him directly to the airport to catch a flight to Los Angeles. She's sending him to stay with his aunt and uncle and their children, where it's safer. He'll enroll in school there until things calm down.

In real life, Banks found himself at a crossroads his junior year of high school. He loved basketball but low grades made him ineligible to play.

Banks' mom told him, "You have to find something to do after school," so he joined a theater group. That's where he says he fell in love with performing.

The acting newcomer says he's looking forward to meeting more Black artists who can help him navigate showbiz.

"I'd love to work with LaKeith Stanfield. Big fan of him. Huge fan of Denzel (Washington.). Daniel Kaluuya, I'd love to work with him and Sterling K. Brown. Damson Idris. These are all artists that I look up to." □



This image released by ABC shows co-host Whoopi Goldberg on the set of the daytime talk series "The View."

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Whoopi Goldberg returned to "The View" on Monday after a

two-week suspension for remarks about the Holocaust, expressing surprise at some

Whoopi Goldberg returns to 'The View' after suspension

people who had reached out to her during her absence. Goldberg had been criticized for comments Jan. 31 on the daytime talk show where she said the Holocaust was not about race, but rather about man's inhumanity to others. She apologized, but ABC News President Kim Godwin told her to sit out two weeks. "I want to thank everybody who reached out while I was away," Goldberg said at the opening of Monday's show. "I'm telling

you, people reached out from places that made me go, 'wait, wait, what? Really? OK. I listened to what everybody was saying and I was grateful.'"

She did not specify any of the people who reached out to her. Jewish leaders had criticized her initial statement, noting that Nazi leader Adolf Hitler had referred to Jews as an inferior race. Goldberg apologized online the night she made the remark, and on the next day's show. "Yes,

I am back," Goldberg said as she took the stage with her co-hosts on Monday.

"There is something kind of marvelous about being on a show like this because we are 'The View' and this is what we do," she said. "Sometimes we don't do it as elegantly as we could. But it's five minutes to get in information about topics and that's what we try to do everyday."

She said the hosts will continue to have tough conversations. □

Valieva remains in Olympics; Shiffrin preps for downhill

By **BERNIE WILSON**

AP Sports Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Teen sensation Kamila Valieva has been cleared for takeoff in women's figure skating in a ruling in a Russian doping case that has caused havoc with one of the marquee events of the Beijing Olympics.

Valieva will have a chance for a second gold medal at this year's Olympics after the Court of Arbitration for Sport ruled Monday she can compete this week despite failing a previous drug test.

The 15-year-old Valieva already set Beijing abuzz when she landed the first quadruple jumps by a woman at the Olympics during her thrilling performance that helped the Russians win the gold medal in the team event. She is the favorite in the women's individual competition that starts Tuesday with the short program and concludes Thursday with the free skate. Valieva has been practicing regularly since the doping scandal broke and skated in her allotted practice time slot shortly after CAS released its ruling. The ruling came less than 12 hours after a hastily arranged hearing that lasted into early Monday morning. CAS decided that she does not need to be provisionally suspended ahead of a full investigation. She tested positive for a banned heart drug on Dec. 25.

The court gave her a favorable decision in part because she was a minor — a



Kamila Valieva, of the Russian Olympic Committee, trains at the 2022 Winter Olympics, Monday, Feb. 14, 2022, in Beijing.

"protected person" — and was subject to different rules from an adult athlete. Now, Valieva and her fellow Russian skaters can aim for the first podium sweep of women's figure skating in Olympic history.

The ruling doesn't decide the fate of the gold medal she won as part of the team competition. The United States won silver and would be in line for gold if the Russian medal is revoked.

The International Olympic Committee said there will be no medal ceremony if Valieva places in the top three in the women's individual event.

U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee CEO Sarah Hirshland said the committee is disappointed by the message the ruling sends.

She said athletes are being denied the right to know they're competing on a level playing field and that it's part of a systemic and pervasive disregard for clean sport by Russia.

SHIFFRIN TO ENTER DOWNHILL

Mikaela Shiffrin will race in Tuesday's downhill, her fourth event at the Beijing Games and the first time she's competed in that event in her Olympic career. She finished a second training session at the Yanqing Alpine Skiing Center with the 15th-fastest time among the women who didn't miss a gate.

The two-time gold medalist in Alpine skiing did not finish her opening runs in either of her first two events, the two-leg giant slalom

and slalom. She then finished ninth in the super-G, another race she hadn't previously entered at an Olympics.

MONOBOB HISTORY

Kaillie Humphries of the United States made history by winning the Olympic debut of monobob, the one-woman bobsled.

Humphries became the first woman to win Olympic gold for two different countries, and the first Olympian to win gold for both the United States and Canada. She also is the first woman to win three golds in bobsledding, with a chance for a fourth later this week in the two-person bobsled.

Humphries won two gold medals and one bronze for Canada. She joined the U.S. team in 2019 after say-

ing she had suffered mental and emotional trauma and no longer felt safe being a part of that program. When she crossed the finish line, she waved an American flag and chanted "U-S-A! U-S-A!"

"As I age, I've learned life is very unpredictable and we don't always know our path forward and what the future holds," Humphries said. "We do the best we can with each and every obstacle or path change that gets thrown at us. What's important is to fight for ourselves."

American teammate Elana Meyers Taylor finished second, winning her fourth Olympic medal.

KISSING THE GAMES GOODBYE

American ice dancers Madison Hubbell and Zachary Donohue won the bronze medal and then bent down and kissed the ice where the Olympic rings are painted.

"It was just a moment, I think, for both of us to say goodbye to Olympic ice and thank this journey that's created, you know, the people that we are today," Hubbell said.

The United States has medaled in each of the first three figure skating events at the Beijing Olympics. Hubbell and Donohue were part of the team silver medal before Nathan Chen won gold in the men's event. Chen was part of a loud American contingent cheering on Hubbell and Donohue at Capital Indoor Stadium. □

Jozy Altidore joins New England after 7 years in Toronto

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. (AP)

— Former U.S. national team forward Jozy Altidore signed with Major League Soccer's New England Revolution on Monday.

Altidore left Toronto last week after seven seasons when that team exercised a contract buyout. The 32-year-old agreed to a one-year contract extension with the Revolution through 2024.

New England said Toronto remains responsible for a

portion of Altidore's salary through 2023.

"I believe Jozy can continue to be an outstanding goal scorer, and we will work hard to get him back to full fitness and in good form over the next couple of months," New England coach Bruce Arena said in a statement.

Altidore scored four goals in 16 MLS matches last season and had 62 in 139 regular-season matches with Toronto. He also has played

for the New York Red Bulls (2006-08), Villarreal (2008, 2010-11), Xerez (2009), Hull (2009-10), Bursaspor (2011), AZ Alkmaar (2011-13) and Sunderland (2013-15).

Altidore has 42 goals in 115 appearances for the U.S. from 2007-19, last appearing in the 2019 CONCACAF Gold Cup final. He is a two-time U.S. Soccer Federation player of the year.

Altidore is married to former U.S. Open tennis champion Sloane Stephens. □



Toronto FC forward Jozy Altidore reacts during an MLS soccer match on Saturday, Oct. 30, 2021, in Atlanta.

Associated Press

Analysis: Built to win now, Rams deliver a Super Bowl title

By **ROB MAADDI**

**AP Pro Football Writer
INGLEWOOD, Calif. (AP)**

— Built to win now, the Los Angeles Rams delivered a shiny, new trophy for Tinseltown.

Pressure? What pressure? With LeBron James dancing to the beat during a halftime show featuring hip-hop legends Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg and Eminem, and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Magic Johnson and Clayton Kershaw sitting in a crowd filled with Walk of Fame stars, Matthew Stafford, Cooper Kupp and Aaron Donald joined L.A.'s fraternity of champions.

Stafford tossed a 1-yard touchdown pass to Kupp with 1:25 remaining and the Rams rallied to beat the Cincinnati Bengals 23-20 to win the Super Bowl at home in their glitzy, \$5 billion stadium built by owner Stan Kroenke. The organization went all-in to win it all, trading a slew of draft picks to acquire Stafford and Von Miller in 2021 and Jalen Ramsey in 2019. They also signed Odell Beckham Jr. during the season.

The Rams haven't had a first-round pick since selecting Jared Goff No. 1 overall in 2016, and they don't own another one until 2024. But they now have a Vince Lombardi Trophy to show for it.

"I think it's a lot of good decisions stacked on one another," coach Sean McVay



Los Angeles Rams players celebrate with the Lombardi Trophy after defeating the Cincinnati Bengals in the NFL Super Bowl 56 football game Sunday, Feb. 13, 2022, in Inglewood, Calif.

Associated Press

said. "I'm just really pleased to be associated with a group that is not afraid to shoot their shot and take chances on things we feel like is in the best interest of the football team. There are a lot of rolled eyes at us, but we believe in those things and we're going to do things that we think are in the best interest."

McVay pointed to general manager Les Snead, COO Kevin Demoff and vice president Tony Pastors being in sync.

"Whether it's myself, Les, Kevin, Tony Pastors and it all starts with Mr. Kroenke and his trust and willingness," he said. "Then the players being able to on-

board the guys in the right way, it's sweet and I'm really happy for these guys." The Rams became the second team to play a Super Bowl in their stadium, following the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in 2021. Both did it with veteran quarterbacks in the first season with their team. The Buccaneers went all-in, signing Tom Brady, Rob Gronkowski, Leonard Fournette and Antonio Brown. They got their title. So did the Rams, who eliminated Brady and the Bucs in the divisional round after wasting a 27-3 lead. Stafford hadn't won a playoff game in 12 seasons with the Detroit Lions before leading Los Angeles to four

postseason wins, including three straight by three points.

"I love playing this game for the competition, for the relationships, for the hard times, for the good times, for all of it," Stafford said. "This game can teach us so much as people. I get to go to work with people from all walks of life and come together and go for one goal, and for 12 years that goal wasn't reached. It tore me up inside, but I knew I could keep playing and try to find a way and the fact that we reached that goal today is so special."

Fittingly, Donald preserved the lead by pressuring Joe Burrow into throwing an in-

complete pass on fourth down in the final minute as the Bengals were trying to drive for a tying field goal. The Rams' dominant defensive line had seven sacks, six in the second half. Donald and Miller led the way with two each.

"It means everything. This organization drafted me eight years ago to have an opportunity to help bring this here," Donald said. "To start in St. Louis and have our struggles and then come to L.A. and be able to build something special, bring in Coach McVay — one thing I told him when he got here, before I had the opportunity to play for him and get to know him, I told him as long as he's here, I want to continue to be a part of this organization and help build on the legacy. We're building a legacy. Legacies are built not from individual stats, but from team success. The ultimate goal is to be a world champion, I've been saying that for the past few years. To finally get the opportunity to feel this, be living in it right now, this time, this moment — it's hard to put it in words right now." Even losing Beckham to a knee injury wasn't going to stop the Rams. Their offense slowed down after Beckham went down, but Stafford and Kupp came through in the end.

Just like Hollywood scripted it. □



Felix Auger-Aliassime of Canada celebrates winning against Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece in two sets, 6-4, 6-2, in their final men's singles match of the ABN AMRO world tennis tournament at Ahoy Arena in Rotterdam, Netherlands, Sunday, Feb. 13, 2022.

Associated Press

ROTTERDAM, Netherlands (AP) — Felix Auger-Alias-

sime won his first career title at the ninth attempt,

Auger-Aliassime beats top-seeded Tsitsipas to win 1st title

upsetting top-seeded Stefanos Tsitsipas 6-4, 6-2 in the Rotterdam final on Sunday to deny his opponent an eighth title. Victory at the indoor tournament came as a relief for the 21-year-old Canadian after losing his previous eight finals dating back to 2019.

"It has not been the smoothest road since my first final," Auger-Aliassime said.

"It is an amazing day for me to get my first title and especially here. I played

my first ATP main draw here a couple of years ago, so it is right I won my first title here."

The third-seeded Auger-Aliassime hit seven aces and won 93% of his first serve points, compared to just one ace for Tsitsipas. The big-serving Greek was unusually poor on his serve with four double-faults and only 31 of 55 first serves landing in.

His second serve let him down, too, and he won only 33% of points on it.

It was Auger-Aliassime's

third win in eight matches against Tsitsipas, and he did not face a break point in a dominant performance where he broke Tsitsipas three times.

"He was playing very good tennis, producing good shots and serving incredibly well throughout the match. I wasn't able to respond," Tsitsipas said.

"I wasn't able to respond. I wasn't able to serve well today and my percentages were so low."

The 23-year-old Tsitsipas dropped to 7-11 in finals. □